

Message Text

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SUBJECT: COMMEMORATION OF MEETING ON THE ELBE AT TORGAU
BETWEEN U.S. AND SOVIET TROOPS IN 1945

1. SUMMARY: AN ARTICLE BY A FORMER SOVIET GENERAL, APPEARING IN THE EAST GERMAN PRESS, COMMEMORATES THE MEETING BETWEEN SOVIET AND AMERICAN SOLDIERS ON THE ELBE IN 1945. THE ARTICLE SEVERELY DOWNGRADES THE CONTRIBUTION WHICH UNITED STATES ASSISTANCE TO THE SOVIET UNION DURING THESECONDWORLD WAR MADE TO THE VICTORY OF SOVIET ARMS ON THE EASTERN FRONT. WE HAVE HEAR, BOTH THROUGH LOCAL SOVIET AND EAST GERMAN SOURCES, THAT A COMMEMORATIVE FUCTION IS TO BE HELD IN EARLY JUNE AT TORGAU ON THE ELBE INVOLVING UNOFFICIAL AMERICAN REPRESENTATION FROM VETERANS GROUPS. WE ASSUME THESE GROUPS INCLUDE THOSE THAT HAVE MET ON OCCASION OVER THE YEARS WITH COUNTERPART SOVIET VETERANS OF THE MEETING ON THE ELBE. END SUMMARY.

2. ACTION REQUESTED: INSOFAR AS POSSIBLE, THE DEPARTMENT
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IS REQUESTED TO INFORMTHE EMBASSY OF THE PLANS OF THESE

AMERICAN GROUPS BEFORE THEIR ARRIVAL HERE. IF CONSIDERED DESIRABLE, WE ARE PREPARED TO BRIEF SUCH GROUPS AT THE EMBASSY ON THE GENERAL ATTEMPT TO FALSIFY THE HISTORICAL RECORD WHICH APPEARS CONSISTENTLY IN THE EAST GERMAN PRESS.

3. AN ARTICLE WRITTEN BY SOVIET GENERAL ALEXEI SHADOV IN COMMEMORATION OF THE SUBJECT MEETING WAS PUBLISHED IN NEUES DEUTSCHLAND ON APRIL 23, 1975. GENERAL SHADOV RELATES HIS PERSONAL REMEMBRANCES OF HIS MEETING WITH GENERAL HODGES OF THE FIRST AMERICAN ARMY ON APRIL 30 AND THE INITIAL ENCOUNTER ON APRIL 25, 1945, OF A RECONNAISSANCE FORCE FROM THE 69TH US INFANTRY DIVISION AND SOLDIERS OF THE 58TH SOVIET GUARD DIVISION. SHADOV RELATES THAT THE AMERICAN OFFICERS HE ENCOUNTERED ASKED WHAT ROLE THE HELP PROVIDED BY THE UNITED STATES HAD PLAYED FOR THE SOVIET UNION DURING THE WAR AND WHICH AMERICAN EQUIPMENT AND WEAPONS THE GUARD ARMY POSSESSED. SHADOV RESPONDED THAT IN 1942 A NUMBER OF TANKS AND SOME LARGE CALIBER ANTI-AIRCRAFT GUNS HAD BEEN RECEIVED FROM THE UNITED STATES BUT THAT IN GENERAL THE TROOPS OF THE SOVIET ARMY IN THE COURSE OF THE WAR HAD RECEIVED THEIR WEAPONS AND EQUIPMENT FROM SOVIET PRODUCTION. SOME AMERICAN EQUIPMENT, PRESUMABLY RECEIVED LATER, IN THE FORM OF MOTOR VEHICLES, PARTICULARLY THE STUDEBAKER, SHADOV SAYS PERFORMED WELL. SHADOV RELATES THAT HE GAVE THIS INFORMATION TO THE AMERICANS IN ALL TRUTH AND FRIENDSHIP. THE ARTICLE CONCLUDES WITH THE HOPE THAT THE AMERICAN VETERANS OF THE MEETING ON THE ELBE STILL REMEMBER THE MEETING AS DO THEIR RUSSIAN COMPATRIOTS.

4. COMMENT: THIS IS THE FIRST ARTICLE TO APPEAR RECENTLY ON THE SUBJECT OF THE MEETING ON THE ELBE. PRIOR TO ITS PUBLICATION, THE EMBASSY RECEIVED A FEW PHONE CALLS, PRIMARILY FROM WEST GERMAN JOURNALISTS, ASKING WHETHER THERE WOULD BE ANY OFFICIAL CELEBRATION OF THE ELBE MEETING AND WHETHER THERE WOULD BE ANY COMMEMORATION ON APRIL 25 ITSELF. THE EMBASSY RESPONDED THAT THERE ARE NO PLANS FOR ANY OFFICIAL AMERICAN REPRESENTATION AT SUCH A FUNCTION. OUR UNDERSTANDING FROM LOCAL LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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SOURCES, HOWEVER, IS THAT SOME AMERICAN VETERANS GROUPS HAVE BEEN INVITED TO MEET WITH SOME SOVIET GROUPS AT THE ELBE IN EARLY JUNE IN COMMEMORATION OF THE 1945 MEETING.

5. THE EMBASSY BELIEVES THAT AMERICAN GROUPS VISITING HERE FOR A COMMEMORATION OF THE MEETING ON THE ELBE SHOULD, IF POSSIBLE, BE MADE AWARE OF THE EFFORTS OF THE EAST GERMAN

PRESS AND SOVIET SPIKESMEN TO DISTORT THE HISTORICAL RECORD AND DOWNPLAY THE ROLE OF U.S. AND ALLIED FORCES IN THE DEFEAT OF NAZI GERMANY AND THE AXIS FORCES IN EUROPE IN WWII. THIS FALSIFICATION INVOLVES NOT ONLY THE DOWNGRADING OF THE AMERICAN ASSISTANCE PROVIDED TO THE SOVIET UNION DURING WORLD WAR II AS IN THE ABOVE ARTICLE, BUT ALSO ADVANCES THE MORE GENERAL PROPOSITION THAT SOVIET FORCES ALMOST SINGLE-HANDEDLY WERE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE DEFEAT OF NAZI GERMANY. THE DEPARTMENT IS REQUESTED TO INFORM THE EMBASSY OF THE PLANS OF THESE AMERICAN VETERANS. THE EMBASSY IS READY TO BRIEF THESE GROUPS ABOUT THE DISTORTIONS OF THE HISTORICAL RECORD RELATING TO WORLD WAR II AS THEY APPEAR IN THE EAST GERMAN PRESS. GROVE

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